

to work, we must keep Medicare and Medicaid available to the working disabled.

There is one segment to the disabled population that I urge my colleagues to give special consideration: End Stage Renal Disease patients.

As you know, there are about 260,000 Americans on dialysis and another 80,000 who are dependent on a kidney transplant (with about 11,500 kidney transplants performed annually). About 120,000 dialysis patients are of working age (between 20 and 64), yet fewer than 28,000 are working.

The "USRDS Abstract of Medical Evidence Reports, June 1, 1996 to June 1, 1997," reveals that 38.1% of all dialysis patients 18–60 years of age were employed full time, part time, or were students before onset of ESRD.

But only 22.9% of ESRD patients in the same age group were employed full time, part time, or were students after the start of dialysis. This 15% (38.1% minus 22.9%) differential is the prime hope for return to work efforts.

Of the transplant patients, most (88%) are of working age, but only about half of them are working.

Section 102 of your bill provides Medicare coverage for working individuals with disabilities—but ESRD dialysis patients already have this protection. For transplant patients, Medicare does not cover their major health need—coverage of \$8,000–\$10,000 per year for immunosuppressive drugs—after 36 months.

Clearly, we should tailor some special provisions to this population.

I would like to suggest a series of ESRD return-to-work amendments that would save total government revenues in the long run. While these proposals may increase Medicare spending, they would reduce Social Security disability and Medicaid spending.

There are just preliminary ideas, and I hope that you and the renal community could refine these ideas prior to mark-up.

(1) A huge percentage of ESRD patients qualify for Medicaid. The disease is so expensive (\$40,000–\$60,000 per patient per year) and the out-of-pocket costs so high that it impoverishes many. For transplant patients, the cost of life-saving immuno-suppressive drugs alone can be \$8,000, \$10,000 or more per year. No wonder many are tempted to avoid actions which would disqualify them for help.

As part of general Medicare policy, I have always thought that we should cover pharmaceuticals and, in particular, indefinitely cover immuno-suppressive. It is maddening to hear the stories of \$80,000–\$100,000 kidney transplants lost, because a patient couldn't afford the \$10,000 per year of medicine.

I think a good case can be made to add to this bill coverage of immuno-suppressives indefinitely, to encourage people to leave Medicaid/Disability and return to work.

(2) Some ESRD facilities do a good social work job helping patients return to work. Others don't seem to even try. We should honor and reward those centers which, on a risk adjusted basis, are doing the best job of rehab in their renal network area.

The honor could be as simple as a Secretarial award of excellence and public recognition.

The reward could be something more tangible—a cash payment to the facility to each

patients of working age who does not have severe co-morbidities which the center is able to help return to work (above a baseline—perhaps 5% of eligible patients). For example, if a center had 100 working age patients, it could receive a \$1000 payment for each patient above 5 who had lost employment and is helped to return to work. This would be a phenomenally successful investment and would particularly compensate the dialysis center for the cost of vocational rehab and social work.

(3) Renal dialysis networks, which are designed to help ensure ESRD center quality, should be able to apply for designation as rehab agencies and for demonstration grants under this legislation.

The law spelling out the duties of Networks has a heavy emphasis on rehabilitation. Indeed, it is the first duty listed:

"... encouraging, consistent with sound medical practice, the use of those treatment settings most compatible with the successful rehabilitation of the patient and the participation of patients, providers of services, and renal disease facilities in vocational rehabilitation programs;"<sup>1</sup>

I suspect that the 17 Networks vary widely in their emphasis on rehabilitation. Again, the Network(s) that do the best should receive recognition and share their success with the others.

(4) Kidney failure remains a medical mystery. It often happens very quickly, with no warning. But for thousands of others, there is a gradual decline of kidney function. I am told by medical experts that in many cases the descent to terminal or end-stage renal disease can be slowed by (1) nutrition counseling, or (2) medical treatment by nephrology specialists.

I hope that you will make it clear that the Medicaid (or Medicare) funds provided in this program to prevent disability could be used to delay the on-set of the devastatingly disruptive and expensive ESRD. Monies spent in this area would return savings many times over.

Also in the "preventive area," some of the leaders in the renal community are reporting exciting results from more frequent, almost nightly dialysis. Like frequent testing by diabetics for blood sugar levels, it may be that more frequent dialysis can result in a less disrupted life and better chance to contribute to the workforce. We should watch these medical developments and if there is a chance that some additional spending on more frequent, but less disruptive dialysis would encourage return to work, we should be supportive.

(5) Finally, I urge you to coordinate this bill with another proposal of the Administrative—skilled nursing facility employment of aides to help with feeding. As you know, last summer we received a GAO report on the horror of malnutrition and death by starvation in some nursing homes, due to a lack of staffing to take the time to help patients who have trouble eating and swallowing and who take a long, long time to eat (e.g., many stroke patients). A coordinated effort by the nursing home industry and ESRD centers to fill this minimum wage type position would help nursing home patients while starting many long-out-of-work ESRD patients back on the road to work.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few, quick ideas. I am sure that experts in this field could suggest other steps to ensure that the ESRD program not only saves lives, but helps people have a good and productive life.

## A TRIBUTE TO MARY MAHONEY'S OLD FRENCH HOUSE RESTAURANT

**HON. GENE TAYLOR**

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, March 18, 1999*

Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share with my colleagues news of two rather unique accolades for the celebrated Mary Mahoney's Old French House Restaurant in Biloxi, Mississippi.

Since opening its doors on May 7, 1964 in the refurbished Louis Frasier house that dates from 1737, this venerable establishment has been a Gulf Coast culinary landmark serving friends and travelers from near and far. The late Mary Mahoney and her dedicated family built their business on the tenets of excellent cuisine and service as well as an historically authentic Old South atmosphere, which over time has earned them international acclaim.

Among the numerous celebrities whose names grace their guest book are Sam Donaldson, Alexander Haig, Robert Redford, Denzel Washington, Randy Travis, and Dick Clark. During the Reagan Administration, Mary Mahoney catered a ceremony on the White House lawn for President and Mrs. Reagan and their guests.

All were impressed, but none left a more impressive gratuity than author John Grisham. In his recent bestseller, *The Runaway Jury*, Mr. Grisham compliments the restaurant by name and offers the reader a glimpse inside by having the judge in his novel host a fictional lunch for the jurors and court officers at "Mary Mahoney's". Through Mr. Grisham's narrative the reader gets to share in the "crab cakes and grilled snapper, fresh oysters and Mahoney's famous gumbo. \* \* \*" He goes on to write, "By the time the jury was seated for the afternoon session, everyone present had heard the story of their splendid lunch."

Now a newly released book celebrates the restaurant's vivacious founder and guiding spirit. It is entitled, *A Passion for People: The Story of Mary Mahoney and Her Old French House Restaurant*. Written by Mississippi journalist and family friend Edward J. Lepoma, himself a regular in Mary's inner circle of guests, this photo-filled, loving memoir tells of the trials and ultimate triumph of a second generation American with a dream. The dream was that of creating a world class restaurant in Biloxi, Mississippi, where the dining experience would be matched by the warm ambience that told all who visited, "Tonight, you are among friends."

With its quaint art-filled dining rooms, superior wine list, and captivating Southern charm and hospitality, Mary Mahoney's Old French House Restaurant provides a memorable evening for first-time and long-time guests, an excellent backdrop for the novelist, and is a source of civic pride for the citizens of Biloxi and the entire Mississippi Gulf Coast region.

<sup>1</sup> Sec. 1881(c)(2)(A); see also (B) and (H).

# HONORING LAUREN DEBOWES FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN DANCE

## HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, March 18, 1999*

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to congratulate Lauren DeBowes for her outstanding achievements as an Irish dancer. A resident of New Haven, she will be representing Connecticut and the United States at the All World Irish Dance Championship in Ennis County Clare, Ireland.

Lauren is one of five young women in her age group from the New England area who will be making the trip to compete at the World Championship. With only 8 years of competitive dance experience under her belt, this is a truly impressive accomplishment. Teamed with her coach, John O'Keefe, Lauren performs both the soft dance and hard shoe dance, both of which have led her to success in several local competitions.

I was a tap dancer when I was young and can recall the thrill of recitals and concerts. I can only imagine the excitement that Lauren is feeling as she prepares for her trip to Ireland. Her hard work, dedication and enthusiasm has put her at a level to compete with the best in the world.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my best wishes to Lauren as she celebrates her 16th birthday. This is certainly a special year. It is a pleasure for me to rise today and join with her family, friends, and the New Haven community to honor Lauren DeBowes for her tremendous accomplishments as an Irish dancer. Connecticut and the nation are indeed fortunate to be represented by such a talented young woman.

# EXPRESSING OPPOSITION TO DECLARATION OF PALESTINIAN STATE

SPEECH OF

## HON. JOHN ELIAS BALDACCI

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 16, 1999*

Mr. BALDACCI. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to offer my remarks on both the substance of H. Con. Res. 24 and the context in which it is being considered. The Middle East peace process is at a critical stage, the Oslo Agreement will expire on May 4, 1999 and the legal framework for the peace process will come to an end. Despite the recent breakdown in negotiations, I applaud President Clinton and Secretary of State Albright for their tireless efforts towards achieving a lasting and just peace.

I agree with the majority of the text of H. Con. Res. 24 and therefore I supported it. The final status of the lands controlled by the Palestinian Authority should be determined under the auspices of Oslo or another framework. While Yasser Arafat may have the right to make unilateral declarations after Oslo, it will not be helpful to reaching peace and could inflame the violence that looms over the region every day.

However, I am disturbed by what H. Con. Res. 24 does not say. It does not condemn

the "unilateral actions" taken by Israel in direct violation of Oslo and the Wye River agreements. It ignores the responsibilities and commitments made by the Netanyahu Administration. In short, it is not a balanced resolution.

In the coming months I will continue to support the Administration's efforts in the Middle East and offer my support for all those who truly seek peace in the region. I will also work with my colleagues in the House to craft more balanced resolutions that call on both sides to adhere to the letter and spirit of their commitments.

# INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION TO EXPAND THE TAX DEDUCTION FOR STUDENT LOAN INTEREST PAYMENTS: ELIMINATING THE 60-PAYMENT RESTRICTION

## HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, March 18, 1999*

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation on behalf of myself, and Representatives JOHNSON (of Connecticut), MATSUI, and ENGLISH, to expand the student loan interest payment tax deduction.

As a college education becomes both increasingly expensive and increasingly important in getting a job and being a productive and active participant in our democratic society, we must continue to look for ways to help students pay for tuition and related educational expenses.

As a part of the Tax Payer Relief Act of 1997, the interest paid on student loans became eligible for an "above-the-line" deduction on Federal income taxes. This tax provision is just beginning to provide needed relief to many student borrowers.

However, under current law, only the first 60 loan payments are eligible for the deduction. Because student loan payments are typically made monthly, this means that students can deduct interest payments on their taxes for only 5 years of repayment, not including time periods spent in either forbearance or deferment.

Our legislation would simply lift the 60-payment restriction and allow borrowers to deduct interest payments for the entire period of repayment.

Extending the time limit on the tax deduction is one of the most direct and straightforward changes we can make in current law to relieve the increasing burden of student loan debt. Loans now comprise 60 percent of all postsecondary student aid, compared to just 45 percent 10 years ago.

Our legislation will be particularly helpful to students with high loan debt and those who choose to pay over longer periods. The latter group includes those who choose "income contingent repayment," that is those who make smaller payments over a longer period of time, especially those who maintain a commitment to lower-paying public service occupations.

Eliminating the 60 payment period also will ease difficult, confusing, and costly reporting requirements currently required for both borrowers and lenders. Thus far, these reporting

requirements have proved so difficult that the IRS has already relaxed the rules for reporting during the 1998 tax year.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass this important legislation.

# EXCELLENCE REWARDED AT BURBANK HIGH SCHOOL

## HON. CRO D. RODRIGUEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, March 18, 1999*

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the academic decathlon team members, coaches, and parents at Burbank High School in my hometown, San Antonio, Texas. At the state Academic Decathlon competition for medium-size schools, Burbank placed third among 225 Texas high schools. This great accomplishment reflects the hard work and countless hours of preparation by students and school officials alike.

These students have demonstrated exceptional time management skills, self-discipline, and determination. They stayed focused on their priorities and set high standards for themselves. The City of San Antonio is proud of all nine members who received 14 individual medals in addition to the third-place team medal. Included in the team award was a gold medallion and a \$250 scholarship for each team member.

I would like to thank the coaches and parents of these diligent students for all their efforts in making this accomplishment possible. These students have been successful because of their hard work and support from family and teachers. They are paving the way to a bright and exciting future.

# A TRIBUTE TO ST. JOSEPH'S VILLAGE IN SELDEN, LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK

## HON. MICHAEL P. FORBES

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, March 18, 1999*

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this historic chamber to share with my colleagues the story of St. Joseph's Village in Selden, Long Island, New York. On Saturday, March 20, 1999, this special community, built by the Diocese of Rockville Center, will celebrate the 20th anniversary of its ground breaking. I stand here today in the People's House to talk about St. Joseph's Village because it embodies a unique spirit of community and cooperation; where its residents help each other and work to improve the lives of those in the surrounding community—even the world.

This Saturday evening, I have the privilege of helping the community pay tribute to a community within a community; St. Joseph's Village. Since its inception, 20 years ago, its 200 residents have made noteworthy contributions to an array of causes, from national charities to local food and clothing drives, and have improved the lives of individuals from around the world and at home on Long Island.

St. Joseph's Village began as an experiment. It was the first subsidized senior and